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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MEADOWS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 13, 2018.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK MEADOWS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 8, 2018, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

MR. SYED JAMAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind my colleagues and the American public about what is happening to families around this country and why this Congress must enact comprehensive immigration reform as quickly as possible.

Syed Jamal is the father of three, a husband, and a chemistry professor from Bangladesh who has lived in the United States for 30 years. He had over-

stayed his visa but had been checking in periodically with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE, as he was told to do. But on January 24, as he was getting ready to take his kids to school, ICE officers pulled up, put him in handcuffs, and arrested him.

As was talked about this morning on most of the stations, they threatened his children that they too would be arrested if they tried to hug him goodbye. He was detained for several weeks without the ability to contact his family.

Despite his lawyers', the community's, and my efforts, he was set to be deported yesterday. He was on his way to Bangladesh, where he probably would have been killed, when an emergency appeal was successful. He was released in Hawaii but is still in limbo.

I will be working across party lines with Representative JENKINS to see a pathway to citizenship for Mr. Jamal and his wife. I am calling on ICE to bring Mr. Jamal home to be with his family while the court decides his case. Over 96,000 people have signed a petition to stop his deportation.

RECOGNIZING THE BUCKS COUNTY OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Bucks County Opportunity Council for their commitment to serving members of our community. The Opportunity Council will be offering free income tax preparation assistance to low-income residents of Bucks County through its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

Trained and certified volunteers will be available in Levittown, Warminster, Quakertown, and Newtown between February 1 and April 15 to serve as

many members of the community as possible. Individuals and families with a combined income of \$54,000 or less are eligible for assistance through the program. Volunteer tax preparers receive training and need to pass an exam to be certified. Others can assist in support roles such as greeting visitors and scheduling.

The program is sponsored by the IRS and supported locally by the Bucks County Foundation, KeyBank Foundation, and First National Bank & Trust of Newtown.

Mr. Speaker, we offer our thanks to the Bucks County Opportunity Council for all they do for our community.

A SAFE HARBOR FOR HOMEOWNERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday, the IRS and the Department of the Treasury issued a ruling which was good news for folks who live in north central and eastern Connecticut as well as western Massachusetts. In a nutshell, what the IRS did was extend a property casualty loss deduction for homeowners who had foundations built over the last 20 years from material from a quarry which contained a metal substance called pyrrhotite which, when exposed to moisture over time, spiderweb cracks and, in fact, the houses are subject to full collapse.

I have here a photograph which shows, again, a contractor who was repairing one of the foundations of an affected home which shows, again, how fragile the concrete foundation becomes as a result of this condition.

Last year, the IRS issued a ruling that said that homeowners who make the repairs—which can cost up to \$150,000 to \$200,000 because, again, you have to lift the house, pull out the old

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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foundation, pour a new foundation, and relower the house on top of it—would at least be able to get a deduction under an IRS deduction provision that goes back decades, the property casualty loss provision, which was good news.

Unfortunately, in the tax bill which was signed into law by President Trump in December, one of its most boneheaded provisions actually narrowed the scope of the property casualty loss to only those property cases which happened in an area that has been declared a federally declared disaster, which, again, because this, so far, FEMA has ruled is as a result of a manmade product, concrete, does not qualify for that FEMA designation.

Thankfully, we have some outstanding people at the IRS, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury David Kautter, who, again, looked at the tax bill that was signed into law and basically issued the ruling on Tuesday that allows, at least for the next 3 years, homeowners to claim this deduction, again, using an amended return for 2017, as a way of getting the full benefit before the tax bill steps in in 2020 and eliminates this avenue of relief.

This was a provision which never belonged in the tax bill. It affects a much broader cross section of Americans, not just folks from homes with crumbling foundations who are not in declared disaster areas.

I know that members on the House Ways and Means Committee, particularly Congressman RICHIE NEAL, are very focused in terms of trying to fix this really harmful provision that provides almost zero tax savings to the Federal budget but causes huge harm to homeowners like the ones in Connecticut and western Massachusetts.

Again, Congressman NEAL, Congressman LARSON, and I have been working with the IRS over the last 19 months to get this safe harbor for homeowners to be able to get the benefit of this provision.

I want to thank the folks at IRS and Treasury for their ruling on Tuesday that at least allowed another 3-year window for people who are totally innocent victims who, because of the way insurance policies are structured, cannot, in most instances, get property casualty loss coverage for this type of loss to at least be able to soften the blow with this deduction.

Mr. Speaker, included in the bipartisan budget agreement which passed at 5 o'clock in the morning last Friday was a provision that did not receive a great deal of attention but actually will provide a great deal of relief, particularly for America's seniors. In particular, it reduced and narrowed the size of the doughnut hole for seniors who use the Medicare part D prescription drug program.

As many may recall, in 2003, when the Medicare prescription drug benefit was first created, it had a doughnut hole that basically said that seniors who signed up for Medicare part D

after \$2,000 of benefits for prescription drugs covered under the law would then have to pay a full 100 percent deductible until their prescription drug costs reached \$5,000. It was like buying a car, making a monthly payment, and then after 2,000 miles having to get out and walk for the next 3,000 miles until you again hit the trigger for the doughnut hole to kick back in for coverage.

When we passed the Affordable Care Act in 2010, we started the process of narrowing that doughnut hole, again, by 50 percent in year 1. It was again up to 35 percent in 2017, and the bill that passed on Friday night will actually do the final step to eliminate the doughnut hole entirely in 2019.

The really impressive part of that provision is that narrowing is not going to be paid for by the taxpayer. The pharmaceutical companies are the ones who will have to bear the brunt of narrowing that cost so that seniors will again have huge savings in the scope of thousands of dollars because of that provision.

Again, this is an example of where the bipartisan work that was done on that budget bill actually resulted in a very concrete, tangible benefit for America's seniors. I think that will be welcome news for those who are bearing the high cost of prescription drugs.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 9 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Loving God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

As we meditate on all the blessings of life, we especially pray for the blessing of peace in our lives and in our world. May Your special blessings be upon the Members of this assembly as they return from a long weekend in their home districts. Give them wisdom and charity, that they might work together for the common good.

May all that is done this day in the people's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SCHNEIDER led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF RON PARISH

(Mr. HULTGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HULTGREN. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday morning, Ron Parish of Yorkville, Illinois, passed from the loving arms of his wife, Becky, into the open arms of Jesus.

Ron was a lifelong salesman whose career included RC Cola, Nabisco, McCormick spice company, and more. After he retired, he faithfully served our community's homeless at Kendall County PADS.

Ron's people skills served him well in business and in his relationships. He was always reaching out to friends and strangers alike. He would ask how they are doing, how he could help, and he was always pointing them to Jesus.

In fact, Ron and Becky introduced my family to their church, Harvest New Beginnings, and they were the very first to greet us on that God-ordained day 3 years ago when we first visited Harvest New Beginnings. It has become our home church.

Ron was 75 years old and is survived by Becky; two children, Ron, Jr., and Rhonda; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and many other relatives and friends.

I know you are smiling down on us now, Ron. Well done, good and faithful servant.

IMPROVE MONITORING OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

(Mr. SCHNEIDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, today, the heads of our intelligence agencies are testifying in the Senate with a unanimous and stark warning: Russia's meddling in 2016 was not an isolated incident, our midterm elections remain vulnerable, and Putin is targeting the 2018 elections.

"The United States is under attack," said Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats.

Russia's actions demand a serious response, both to hold our attackers accountable and to deter future interference. Remarkably, President Trump